

[Erik Christian Jensen #3]

Mass. 1938-9 [8?]/[?]/39 Eric Jensen - Paper 3

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

NAME OF WORKER MRS. EMILY B. MOORE

ADDRESS 84 ELM STREET, WORCESTER,

MASSACHUSETTS

DATE OF INTERVIEW JUNE 18, 1939

SUBJECT LIVING LORE

NAME OF INFORMANT ERIC JENSEN

ADDRESS WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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Name: Emily B. Moore

Title: Living Lore

Assignment: Erik Christian Jensen

Topic: Danish Steel Worker Paper 3

It was raining torrents but I had told Mr. Jensen I would be around for a visit, so at precisely 3 o'clock, I opened the door of the bicycle shop and said "hello."

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Old Erik was very much troubled for fear I had "caught cold". With my rubbers and umbrella safely stowed away I sat down on the little stool and we began our chat.

"Bad day you should come, but I like to see you . Jah! Last time I tell you when you come again I take you upstairs to see my missus, but she say her talk not so good, and I better tell you. Much she remembers 'bout her days in Denmark and mine, too, and lots of things is done different here. We both laugh when we talk about the funerals in this country. You bury your dead too quick. One day they die and next day they get buried. In Denmark a funeral lasts sometimes a week, and rich people have them longer. Everybody comes and they eat. No, just eat and talk, and in the evening we had church music and prayers. On name days and christenings we have plenty to eat and drink and music to dance. We have everything out of the house, but in the bedrooms, then we dance or play cards or sing. The young people usually dance, maybe four or eight couples, but sometime in the evening, everybody dances.

"Like I tell you, in Denmark the houses are all on one floor, a big sitting room, and a dining room and kitchen, and bed rooms to the size of the families. If lots of children, there is one room for them, and lost of places the beds is made right in the wall, like you say - 'bunks' and all around the room is 'bunks'. For the father and mother, they 2 have beds, but they make them out of wood and the springs is made of rope, but the 'ticks' is made of feathers, you cover up with feather 'ticks', only not so thick, like you sleep on. If you have hired girl, you make for her, room back of kitchen. My missus says what she don't like when she first comes here is the stoves. In Denmark the stoves is in the corner and they are high and every room has his own stove. Sometimes they is high as the ceiling, and that is sometimes 10 or 12 feet. Sometimes theys about 3 feet high. When she comes to Worcester, they is little round stoves and in the middle of the room, or they is little holes in the wall and all open and they blaze up, and sometimes they is big fireplace and big logs is burned. It takes my missus long time to like American stoves. Now, by golly, she has electric stove and she likes.

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"You know, in Denmark, when you go in somebody's house, right in the middle of floor is a table, and on top is a big Bible, and in it is all the names and ages of everybody in your family. Here, you never no more see a Bible on the table.

"Jah! Denmark is nice, but I like better here. You go into a house in Denmark of a evening, you see the children all sittin' round the tables studying their school books, and the missus, she sits by and does needlework, and the Pappa he sets by the stove and smokes and reads, too. No, never do you smoke cigars in your house - the men smoke big pipes, so big - you can put a big handful tobacco in them, and they last all night.

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"Danish families are good families and the children always obey the father and mother, and never fights. Always on the name days (birthday) they give presents, even if it's wild flowers, but never forgets the name days of family. Christmas time in Denmark is good, too. A big tree is put up in the big hall and everybody comes and dances and sings and gives presents. The rich and the poor people mix up that one time in the year. Weeks and mebbe months the wimmin' make the 'aebleskiver' and they give it to everybody that comes. Oh, that's make of apples, and sugar and flour, and like candy and cake, and its hard and you can keep it long time. There's always a big feast, like your banquets, and everybody eats gruel, made out of milk, and they roast duck, stuffed with prunes or chestnuts, and give you that with 'beer sauce'. Oh, Jah! dot iss goot! The beer sauce gives it taste - very good. Why, in Denmark, they use beer like in America they use water. The wimmin make soup out of beer and float slices of rye bread on top. Jah! that is goot, too. We use lots of soup in Denmark, and on Saturdays we have 'Baenkavalling', that's is made out of soup that's left over every day, and they call it soup made in a bench - well just like you say 'leavings' after each day. Oh, we have lots of different soup, and the favorite soup of the [Danes?] is 'Prune Soup'. My missus makes it from prunes, milk, eggs rice and vegetables. Jah, - that's the best soup.

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"Never do I eat breakfast in a lunch cart or outside mine house. First when I come here I must eat out, and they laugh at me, but now I 4 have my house and my missus gives me kind of breakfast Danish people eat. - Well, here you eat bacon or ham with eggs and fried potatoes. My missus makes me my 'smorrebrod' - why, that is a slice of rye bread, with butter and a slice of meat or fish, with beer or tea. That is a national dish of a Danish man. They laugh if you eat that in the outside here. My girls they don't eat that, but my missus and me do. When you come to Danish home for a meal you get some soup, then hot meat with horseradish, then some cake or sweet, and then you have cheese and bread. You must know how to slice the cheese thin, or you're not good cook.

"When you get up from Danish table you say 'thanks for meal'. You see, lots of things different here. You say 'excuse, please' and if you say excuse in Denmark, that means you're sorry, so - you see how it does? Danish people are good, quiet people, always very slow moving, and when you move slow, you think slow, and when you think slow, you never in trouble get. Why, it is true, in Denmark they have the clocks at the railroad station five minutes fast, so the people don't miss their train. The only thing that moves fast is the dogs, and they have lots of racing dogs, and that is funny, now, don't it? Never do you see a Dane walking fast.

"This will be nice time of year in Denmark, for they get ready for Easter; they start with Holy Thursday and everything is shut tight till Monday after Easter. Even the shops and business is closed up, and people are sad, but happy too. They go to church everyday, and then they walk all around the town. In Denmark the churches are on a hill.